

The restoration of the daēnā

The Arsacian period

Around 247 B.C., Aršaka (Arsaces) established a fire temple at his coronation.¹ This regnal fire marked the beginning of the Arsacian era.² He was allegedly descendant of the Persian Artaxšaça (Artaxerxes)³ or Dārayavaṇuš (Darius)⁴, and « having at once acquainted and established a kingship, he became no less memorable among the Parthians than Cyrus among the Persians ... The Parthians paid this honour to his memory, that they called all their kings thenceforward by the name of Arsace. »⁵ The Aršaka-kings felt themselves to be the heirs of the “ancient” Aryan kingdom; they tried to re-conquer all the lands that had once belonged to the Achaemenians (*veterus Persarum terminus*)⁶. The Aršaka-dynasty was in conjunction with the *daēnā māzdayasni*. The Aršaka not only developed the cult of temple fires but also they took measures to re-open the *aθauruna*-schools (= *hērbedestān*) in different lands and reassemble the scattered Avesta texts and other books on the basis of oral traditions and surviving manuscripts.

One Aršaka by name of Valayš (Vologases) is honoured in the fourth book of the *dēnkird* thus: « Valayš descendant of Aršaka, ordered that: Of the Avesta and Zand as assembled in a state of purity, and also of the teaching as derived therefrom, everything that had survived the damage and turmoil of Alexander and the pillage and robbery of the Greeks, in a scattered state all over the Aryan Land; whether written or in oral transmission, as canon, be preserved as it had reached (them), and be made memoranda (books) for the provinces of the kingdom. »⁷

¹ . Cf. Isidore of Charax (first century A.D.), *Σταθμοὶ Παρθικοί*, § 11 Ἀσαάκ ἐν ἧ Ἀρσάκης πρῶτος βασιλεὺς ἀπεδείχθη καὶ φυλάττεται ἐν ταῦθα πῦρ ἀθάνατον. ‘The city of Asaak (in Astauena), in which Arsaces was first proclaimed king; and an everlasting fire is guarded there.’

² . Arsacid era 0 = SB 64 = – 247 / – 246, or Arsacid era 1 = 247 / 246 B.C.

³ . Cf. Syncellus 284 B.C. (in *Corpus scriptorium historiae Byzantinae*, XIII, ed. W. Dindorf, Bonn, 1829, 539) Ἀρσάκης τις καὶ Τηριδάτης ἀδελφοὶ τὸ γένος ἔλκοντες ἀπὸ τοῦ Περσῶν Ἀρταξέρξου...

⁴ . Names of the Arsacid king, taken by Ḥamza from the copy of Mobed:

اشك بن دارا بن دارا (بيروني، الآثار الباقية، ٦، ٥٣)

The Arsacids, according to the *Šāhnāma*:

اشك بن دارا، وقيل من ولد ارش (بيروني، ٦، ٥٥)

⁵ . Justinus, *Historiarum Philippicarum*, XLI, 5, 5-6 Sic Arsaces quaesito simul constitutoque regno non minus memorabilis Parthis quam Persis Cyrus, ... decedit cuius memoriae hunc honorem Parthi tribuerunt, ut omnes exinde reges suos Arsacis nomine nuncupent.

⁶ . Cf. Tacitus, *Annals*, 6, 31.

⁷ . Dk iv M 412. Cf. also Tha‘ālibī apropos of Pacorus.

The Avesta texts were transliterated into an unambiguous alphabet, called *dēn-dīβīrīft*.

After a period of disturbance, some priests found it necessary to refresh their memories by looking up manuscripts in the aθauruna-schools or fire temples. The ceremony of re-kindling a (lesser) sacred fire from the ashes through the offerings of wood and frankincense with recital of an Avesta liturgy is recorded by a native of Lydia, Pausanias in his Description of Greece, written in the second century A.D.: « Those of the Lydians **who are surnamed Persian** (Λυδοῖς ἐπικλήσις Περσικοῖς) have a temple at the city called Hierocaesarea and at Hypaipa. In each of these temples there is an inner chamber, and in this an altar upon which are some ashes of a colour unlike that of ordinary ashes. A magus enters the chamber, bringing dry wood which he places on the altar. After this he first puts a tiara upon his head and next intones an invocation to some god (*yazata*) or other. The invocation is in a barbarian tongue, and utterly unintelligible to a Greek. While intoning he **peruses a book** (ἐπικλήσιν ὅτου δὴ θεῶν ἐπάδει βάρβαρα καὶ οὐδαμῶς συνετὰ Ἑλλησιν ἐπάδει δὲ ἐπιλεγόμενος ἐκ βιβλίου). This, without the application of a light, inevitably causes the wood to catch fire and break out into a bright flame. »⁸

The Sasanian period

The Sasanian kingdom started as early as 209 A.D. from the heartland of the Achaemenian kingdom around Staxr with the establishment of the sacred fire of Ardašēr son of Pābag in the temple of Anāhitā at Staxr.⁹ Ardašēr drew on both kingdom (Pers. *x^vadāyīh*) and religion (Pers. *dēn*):

He projected himself as heir of the (*Kavi*-)Achaemenian kingdom, thereby implying that he could restore the Aryan land (Pers. *ērān-šahr*). Sāsān, eponym of the Sasanian dynasty, was reputed to have descended from a certain Sāsān son of Artaxšačā «who is called Vohu-manah son of Spəntōdāta. »¹⁰

He entrusted Tōsar with the task of collecting and revising sacred texts, and reducing them to some sort of canon of scripture.¹¹

Tōsar

The priestly teacher Tōsar¹² (third century A.D.) was himself of the royal-Parthian house¹³ who became Ardašēr's counsellor and helped

⁸ . Pausanias, V, 27.3.

⁹ . Cf. KirdEr II 10 *staxr ādur ī anāhid-ardašēr ud anāhid ī bānūg*. Cf. also Tabarī, ch. 1. He was crowned king of kings in his stead in the capital, Ctesiphon, around 227 A.D.

¹⁰ . Cf. Bd 232.

¹¹ . Cf. Dk iv M 412, Dk iii M 406.

¹² . Dk iii M 406 *tōsar hērbed būd*.

Bērōnī's India (توسر هرید الهرايدة (تحقيق مالهند، ١٠)

him to overthrow many local rulers and re-establish the Aryan kingdom in the Aryan land with undivided rule by a monarch.¹⁴ He collected many Avesta manuscripts and prepared a standard edition of the Avesta comprising 21 books as an authoritative text of the Daēnā. He also wrote treatises about both political and religious affairs. Rōzveh (Ibn al-Muqaffa') translated (with some interpolations) some of them into Arabic: Letter to Māhgušnasp king of Pedīšx^vārgar, Letter to the king of India, etc.¹⁵ Mas'ūdī and Bērōnī cited short passages of the Arabic version of the Letter to Māhgušnasp.¹⁶ A certain scribe, Ibn Isfandiār, when residing in X^vārazm (around 1215 A.D.), came on, in the book-market, a codex containing the Arabic versions of some Sanskrit texts and the Arabic version of the letter to (Māh-)gušnasp by Ibn al-Muqaffa'. He translated this letter into Persian and embodied in his History of Tabarestān.¹⁷

Kirdēr

Following soon after Tōsar, Kirdēr (third century A.D.) had no special contribution to fix on the sacred texts necessary in the performance of the religious ceremonies, but he promoted the *daēnā māzdayasni* in the Aryan and non-Aryan lands: « At that time (when Varhrān son of Ohrmazd ascended the throne), too, from land to land, from place to place, many services to the Yazata were increased, and many Victorious Fire(-temples) were set up, many Magian men were rendered happy and prosperous, and many Fires and Magians received official letters of recognition. »¹⁸ Under Varhrān son of Šābuhr «from land to land, from place to place, throughout the entire kingdom, the services to Ahura Mazdā and the Yazata became excellent; the *daēnā māzdayasni* and the Magian men were greatly honoured in the land;

تنشر الزاهد وفي الناس من يستقيه دوشر (التنبية والإشراف، لندن، ١٨٩٣، ١٠٠) Mas'ūdī

رجل فاضل من الفرس يعرف بتسار وكان هريداً. Miskawayh, *The Tajārib al-Umam*, Leyden, 1909, 98. (مشكويه رازي، تجارب الامم)

Ibn Balxī:

اردشير ... وزيرى داشت نام او تسار و پيش از آن از جمله حكيمان بوده بود. (فارسنامه، ابن بلخي)

¹³ Cf. Mas'ūdī :

والأردشير بن بابك أخبار في بدء ملكه مع زاهد من زهادهم وأبناء ملوكهم يقال له يبشر (تنشر) ... (مروج الذهب ومعادن الجوهر، ١، بيروت، ١٩٨٦/١٤٠٦، ٢٥٦)

تنشر الزاهد ... من أبناء ملوك الطوائف افضى ملك ابيه اليه بارض فارس فزهد فيه وكيف دعا الى اردشير ونشر بظهوره وبث الدعاء في البلاد لذلك ووطأ له الامر حتى اجتمع له الملك واستظهر على جميع ملوك الطوائف (التنبية، ١٠٠)

¹⁴ Cf. KAP 3.6 *vas sar-x'adāy ōzāned ud gēhān abāz andar ēvx'adāyīh āvared.*

Pers. *ēvxvadāyīh* 'monarchy' ≈ Arab. ملك الاجتماع (Mas'ūdī, *ibid.*, 99), opp.

ka(r)dag-x'adāyīh (Dk iii M 7) ≈ Arab. ملوك الطوائف.

¹⁵ Cf. Mas'ūdī:

ولتنشر رسائل حسان في انواع السياسة الملوكية والبيانية يخبر عن اردشير وحاله منها رسالته الى ماجشنس ... ورسالته الى ملك الهند وغيرها من رسائله. (التنبية، ١٠٠)

¹⁶ Cf. Mas'ūdī, *Kitāb at-Tanbīh*, 99. Bērōnī, *India*, 53:

كتاب توسر هريذ الهرايزة الى پدشوارگرشاه جواباً عما تجتاه على اردشير بن بابك.

¹⁷ See

بهاء الدين محمد بن حسن بن اسفنديار كاتب، تاريخ طبرستان، ١، ع. اقبال، تهران، ١٣٢١/١٩٤٢، در نخست.

¹⁸ Kirdēr II 7.

and to the Yazata, the water, the fire, and the cattle came great satisfaction in the land. »¹⁹

Pers. dyny *mzdysn /dēn mazdesn/* < Av. *daēnā māzdayasni* refers to the Aryan religion, and also to certain celebrated texts which constitute the basis of the first period of the Aryan religion, viz., the Avesta. Kirdēr speaks of *dēn* "šmār- 'to study (or, memorize) the daēnā', cf. II 17 *vas rad-pesāg grift, ud vas dēn "šmurd gōnag gōnag, ud anīz kirdagān ī yazadān vas abzūd ud abardar būd* 'Many *ratu*-festivals were celebrated, and the *daēnā* much studied in various ways, and many other services to the Yazata were increased and became excellent as well.' II 11 *dēn mazdesn ... vazurg pedixšar būd* 'the *daēnā māzdayasni* was greatly honoured.' II 16 *u-m dēn mazdesn ud muvmard ī xūb andar šahr agrāy ud pedixšarā_{va}nd kird* 'I made lofty and honoured the *daēnā māzdayasni* and the good magian men in the kingdom.' II 16 *kē andar mo_{ye}stān ped dēn mazdesn pahrist* 'who lived in the priestly estate by the *daēnā māzdayasni* ...' I 15-16, II 23 *yašt ud kirdagān ud dēn mazdesn cē nūn ped zīndagān kirīyed* 'The Yasna liturgy and (other) ritual acts and the *daēnā māzdayasni* as it is performed here in life.'

Pers. dyny */dēn/* < Av. *daēnā*. Kirdēr cites a lost passage of the translation of the Avesta, Hādōxt nask, thus: II 22 [ōn] *cōn [ped] nask nimāyed kū mardōm [ka vidurd ... kē] ardā hān x^vēš [dēn ped zan ud sag pedīrag āyed. ud kē ardā ōy hān x^vēš dēn ō vahišt nayed ud kē durvand ōy-iz hān x^vēš dēn ō dušox nayed.* 'As it is shown in the naska, that: « When people pass on, then ... he who is truthful (OPers. *artāvan-*), his own *daēnā* will come toward him (in the form of) a woman (together with) a dog. He who is truthful, his own *daēnā* will lead him to the best <existence> (= paradise, Av. *vahišta- aṅhu-*), and he who is deceitful (Av. *drvañt-*), his own *daēnā* will lead him to the bad existence (Av. *daožan^vha-*). »

Pers. *yšty /yašt/* generally signifies 'worship (with ceremony and offerings)', but also refers to 'the text of liturgy' (*Staota Yesnya*²⁰, and or the Yasna of the seventy-two chapters). The Avesta word *yasna-* 'worship, sacrifice' is rendered by Pers. *yazišn*.²¹

Pers. *krtkny /kirdagān/* 'religious service, texts of the services for the deities'²²; *kirdagān ī yazdān* 'service of the Yazata'²³.

Ādurbād

«The heretics²⁴ and those who destroy²⁵ who, in the priestly estate, did not live truly²⁶ by the *daēnā māzdayasni* and the services to the

¹⁹ . Ibid. 11.

²⁰ . Cf. Dk viii M 679-80 *hādōxt ud yašt ped peyvann ī ō abum dād vidēvdād*, DD 44.6 *yašt ud vīsprad*.

²¹ . Cf. Y 35.7 *yasnəmcā vahməmcā: yazišn ud niyāyišn*. However, in the Manichaean texts, we find *āfrīn yasn ud vahm ō ...* (M 554), *yasn ud vahm ō rōšn ...* (M 1019).

²² . Cf. T II D II 134, 83-4 [*ped*] *kirbag kirdagān parxēzāh* '(whoever) may abide by good deeds and religious services.'

²³ . Cf. Paik. (Parth. inscr.) 69 *krtkny MH y'ztn*.

²⁴ . 'lswmwky < Av. *ašəmaoγa-*.

²⁵ . gwmlc'k /*gumarzāg/* < *vi-marz-/ gumarz-* 'to destroy', cf. Y 31.1 *yōi ... vīmərəncaitē ... yōi zrazdā aṅhən* 'those who destroy ... those who are faithful'.

²⁶ . *ped vizār*. Cf. M 132 & M 5861 (Parthian) *pwrs' d kw pṭ wyc' r š'ḥ' yy pṭ kdgy' kw b' wṭ pṭ twxm sr' yl?*

Yazata » are mentioned in the inscriptions of Kirdēr.²⁷ Under Šābuhr son of Ohrmazd (4th century) an assembly of the notables of the Aryan land and the representatives of the priestly estate (*moγestān*) was convened and Ādurbād son of Mahrspend was required to vindicate the *daēnā* (religion and canon) by submitting to the ordeal²⁸ with metal pouring upon the chest. After he was acquitted apropos of the *daēnā*, a royal edict ensured that: « Now that we have seen the truth of the *daēnā*, we shall not let anyone (become a convert to) the evil religion. »²⁹ The evil religion (*agdēnīh*)³⁰ refers to alien sects, whereas the heresy (*ahlemōγīh*)³¹ and heterodoxy (*judristagīh*)³² refer to sects and doctrines in the Aryan clergy. We are told that the head of one “heretic” school was a certain Sēn, and besides some “heretics” were called *peccībāst(ag)* ‘hypocrite’.

After Ādurbād had proved his “orthodoxy” by ordeal, some of his texts were inserted into the Anthology of the Avesta or the Short Liturgy (*X^vardag abestāg*), for example, *Nām stāyišn* ‘Praise to the name(s)’, *Petit ī pašimānīh* ‘the petit (text of atonement) of repentance’ (also called *Petit ī Ādurbād*).³³

Sēn

Šāyist nē-šāyist 6.7 *abēzag-dād ud veh-dēn amā hem ud pōryōdkēš hem. gumēzag-dād sēn ud hašāgird-iš hend. ud vattar-dād zandīg ud tarsāg ud jahūd ud abārīg ī az ēn šōn hend.*

‘Of a pure law are we of the good religion, (followers) of the first teachers (/ orthodox); of a mixed law are Sēn and his disciples; of an evil law are the Gnostic (Manichaeon), the (God-) fearing (Christian), the Jew, and others of this sort.’

Dēnkird vi M 567 *ahlemōγ si [ēvēnag]: frēftār ud frēftag ud x^vaddōšag. x^vaddōšag hān baved ī gōbed kū sēn veh az ādurbād, ud x^vaddōšagīhā hān ī sēn gired. ud frēftag hān baved cōn hāvištān ī sēn. frēftār cōn x^vad sēn kē tis hān ī cōn pōryōdkēšān ī pēšēnīgān cāšīd ped nigerīšn be vardēnīd.*

²⁷ . Kirdēr II 16.

²⁸ . Cf. Dk viii M 679. Cf. also Dk vii M 644 (*var*) *pesāxt ī abar dēn*.

²⁹ . Dk iv M 413.

³⁰ . Av. *aya.daēnā*- adj., °*na*- m. ‘of evil religion’. Cf. AfZ 3 *yaθa ažiš dahākāi aya.daēna*. Cf. also Bd 216 *dād ī agdēn* (= Islam) *ravāgēnīd*. Pers. *ag-dēnīh* ‘evil religion; infidelity’, ant. *dēn ī mazdesn*, cf. Dk iii M 235.

³¹ . Av. *ašəmaoγa*- adj. m. ‘heretic’, Pers. *ahlemōγ*, cf. Dk iii M 201 *abāz stāyīdan ... do ēvēnag, ahlemōγīg ... agdēnīg*.

³² . Pers. *jud-ristag* ‘of different denomination, heterodox’. Cf. AVN 1.9 *judristagīh ud gumānīh ud juddādestānīh*.

³³ . We find this habit again among the Parsis. For example, Kāvasji E. Kanga took some “*monājāt*” from the Persian book of Dastōr Mullā Firoze entitled *Pand-nāma* (published in the year 1834 A.D.) and inserted them in the Little Avesta (with Avesta text and translation in Gujarati prepared in the year 1880 A.D.).

‘About the ten injunctions of Xusrō, of Immortal Soul, king of kings, son of Kavād, to the Aryan audience of the Assembly, on the authority of the daēnā of Ahura Mazdā.’

^{M 219} *ēk, cāšišn ī dēn mahr, ud īzišn ud kirdagān ī yazdān, hāmis dād ud ēvēn, ped cāštag ud kirdag ī hāvištān ī ādurbād ī mahrspondān, ī az kurān deh būd, kirdan.*

‘One (of his injunctions) was to practice the teachings of the formulas of the religion (/ the Avesta texts), the liturgies and (other) ritual acts (for) the Yazata, together with the laws and traditions in accordance with the teachings and works of the disciples of Ādurbād, son of Mahrspond, who came from the land of Makran.’

The pact of the high-priests with Xusrō

Xusrō, son of Kavād, had to cope with a “heresy” within the clergy preached by a certain Mazdak, son of Bāmdād, who exercised a certain fascination on the laity (*vehān* lit. ‘the good’), and appeared to cause disturbance among the priests (*āsrōnān*). Xusrō rejected Mazdak’s teaching and works, because he was afraid of his force of propaganda among the “populace” (*x^vardagān*)³⁸, and his power of subjugating the kingdom by a band of clergymen. His doctrine was a new interpretation (*zand*) of the daēnā, a kind of *mazdaica superstio*, detached progressively from the Moystān, and implicated the laymen in religious controversies. An assembly was summoned by Xusrō to which seven high priests of the Moystān were invited to put it in order. He urged the priests to teach the collection of Avesta liturgies (*yasnihā*) to the good; at the same time, he demanded of the priests that, the Zand was to be strictly kept from laymen. In this way, he freed his Aryan subjects from the religious quarrels that could divide them into hostile sects.

The pact preserved in the Zand ī Vahman Yasn 2 bears witness to this act:

ped zand ī vahman yasn, hurdad yasn, aštād yasn³⁹ pēdāg kū:

ē bār guzastag mazdak ī bāmdādān dēn-pedyārag ō pēdāgīh āmad, u-šān pedyārag ped dēn ī yazdān kird, hān <bay> anōšag-ruvān husrav <ī kavādān> ⁺māh-vindād (/ ⁺māh-dād)⁴⁰, ⁺veh-šābuhr⁴¹, dād-

³⁸ . In the commentary of the Vd 4.49 it is said, ironically, of Mazdak, thus: *mazdak ī bāmdādān kē-š x^vad sagr x^vard, u-š kasān ped suy ud marg dād*. ‘Mazdak, son of Bāmdād, while he himself ate to the satiety, gave up others to hunger and death.’

³⁹ . The Persian version omits it.

⁴⁰ . مازنداد DH, ماونداد K 20, ماونداد BK, دماوند MU. Māhvindād (ماونداد) is the name of a commentator in the MHD 24.4, 59.1. Cf. also Y 9.10, Y 10.18, Y 11.7, Y 19.11. The seal of a certain Māhdād is also known.

⁴¹ . مابوهر K 20, بن شاپور MU. Cf. MHD A 34.7-8 *veh-šābuhr ī mubedān mubed būd*. Cf. also NM I.4.15.

*ohrmazd ī ādurbāyagān dastvar*⁴², *ādurfarrōbay ī a-drō*⁴³, *ud ādurbād*⁴⁴, *ud ādurmihr*⁴⁵, *ud baxtāfrīd*⁴⁶ *ō pēš x^v āst. u-š peymān aziš x^v āst kū: ēn yasnīhā ped nihān mā dāred, bē ped peyvann ī ašmā zand mā cāšed!*

avēšān andar husrav peymān kird.

‘In the commentary of the Vahman Yasn, and of the Hurdad Yasn and of the Arštād Yasn, it is revealed that:

Once the Accursed Mazdak, son of Bāmdād, the adversary of the religion, appeared, and brought detriment to the religion of the Yazata, then Xusrō of Immortal Soul, son of Kavād, summoned before him Māhvindād (or, Māhdād), Vehšābuhr, Dādohrmazd the high-priest of Ādarbāyagān, Ādarfarrōbay the free-from falsehood⁴⁷, Ādarbād, Ādarmihir and Baxtāfrīd; and he demanded from them a pact, [saying]: “Do not keep these (Avesta) liturgies in concealment, but do not teach the commentaries outside your lineage!”

They made the pact with Xusrō.’

The “pact” put forward in the assembly was accepted and, sealed on the authority of the daēnā (Hurdad Yasn):

Yt 4.9 *zaraθuštra aētəm maθrəm mē fradaxšayō* (Yt 14.46 *fradaēsayōiš*) *anyāt piθre vā puθrāi brārei vā hadō.zātāi āθravanāi vā θrāyaone.*

‘O Zaraθuštra, do not teach this Formula except either to the father for (transmission to) the son, or to the brother for (transmission to) the uterine brother, or to the priest for (transmission to) the θrāyavan!’

The Avesta texts in practical use were the liturgical ones: the *Yasnīhā*. The canonical texts of the Avesta were only studied in the learned circle of the Magi. The word *yasnīhā* refers to any collection of (Avesta) texts required for the liturgical services: the Yasna of the

⁴² . آدر اورد دین دستور ی آدر بادکان . MU. Dādohrmazd is the name of a commentator in the Y 10.18, Y 11.7. The seal of a certain ādur-ohrmazd is also known. Cf. also MHD 9.2, N 40. ŠnŠ 1.3 *cāštag ī ādurohrmazd.*

Firdōsī, M 40.303

کس آمد سوی خره، اردشیر که آید به درگاه هرمزد پیر

⁴³ . کادر فراینیدار باد . MU (Adurafzāyēnīdār & ādurbād?). Or ādurfarrōbay-nerīzah. Cf. ŠnŠ 1.3.

⁴⁴ . Ādurbād is known as commentator. Cf. N 28 *ādurbād ī dādfarroxān*. Cf. also N 31. MHD A36.6 *ādurbād ī mardbūdān*.

⁴⁵ . مهر آذر . Firdōsī, M 40.304

وز استخر مهر آذر پارسی بیامد به درگاه با یار سی

⁴⁶ . MU. Baxtāfrīd is mentioned among commentators, cf. ŠnŠ 20.11, Dk vi M 547, M 578, N 28 (vaxtāfrīd). Dk iii M 113 *ahlav hērbed baxtāfrīd*. A short collection of him is found in the “Pahlavi Texts”, 81.

⁴⁷ . *a-drō* ≈ Skt. *a-droghā-*.

Raham Asha